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Planning for the Private Interest: Land Use Controls and Residential Patterns in Columbus, Ohio, 1900-1970

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executed the buildings and grounds for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Yet Hall states that his first occasion to experience mid-western life, on a business trip to California in 1863, left him with the impression that here resided the first real evidence of civilization in the United States, an intriguing observation that she does not explore (100). Thus, one might wonder what meaning Olmsted's life has for midwesterners. Well, indirectly, quite a bit.

The White City of the 1893 Columbian Exposition, a design concept that Burnham acknowledged was chiefly Olmsted's, influenced city planning in the United States for decades. Many cities, including Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, reflect ideas that were born with the White City, such as stately civic centers and urban parks linked by tree-lined boulevards. In addition, Olmsted shaped a philosophy of parks as integral aspects of community life, not isolated entities. His park designs embodied this philosophy, which he further articulated in lectures and writings. To Olmsted, parks had a vital role to play as civilizing influences in an increasingly industrial society. He created rural interludes in urban spaces, parks designed to civilize city dwellers by providing both respite and recreation, easily accessible yet removed from the grime and hustle of commerce and industry. His ideas about the value of parks influenced a whole generation of park advocates who, beginning in the late nineteenth century, sought to marry social reform with natural resource conservation. Many state park systems, including Iowa's, were born, in part, from such ideals.

Regardless of where one lives, though, Lee Hall's biography, beautifully written and richly illustrated with historic photographs, prints, and drawings, offers us a fascinating view of Olmsted's life and work. Those who feel they know Olmsted well will learn something new; those who want to know more about him could not choose a better place to begin.

Planning for the Private Interest: Land Use Controls and Residential Patterns in Columbus, Ohio, 1900-1970, by Patricia Burgess. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1994. xii, 258 pp. Illustrations, maps, charts, graphs, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$59.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JOHN D. BUENKER, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-PARKSIDE

Patricia Burgess's superbly crafted study of the development of Columbus, Ohio, in the twentieth century resonates on several different levels simultaneously. First and foremost, *Planning for the Private Interest* is the very model of a brilliant monograph—imaginatively conceived, meticulously researched, tightly focused, logically argued,

precise and judicious in its assignment of cause and effect. It is also a carefully planned and executed case study of the application of interactive public and private land use controls in a sizable midwestern metropolis. The study's research design, primary source material, and methodology could be replicated with equal effect in Des Moines, Davenport, or hundreds of similar locales. At the same time, Burgess provides historians with rich, empirically derived insights into several interpretive questions of universal importance. What is the nature of the process by which human agency, here in the form of thousands of individual decisions made by developers, promoters, and homeowners, is transformed into such an impersonal driving force as urbanization? What are the actual dynamics through which a seemingly irresistible reform movement, such as Progressive Era urban planning, results in an even more disastrous version of the situation than the one it was designed to correct? Do such concepts as community, the public interest, or the general welfare have any real meaning or efficacy in a culture so permeated with the values of "privatism"—the bedrock conviction that everyone's primary purpose is the private pursuit of wealth and that a city is nothing more than an arena in which multitudes of individual gain seekers compete for affluence and power?

As Burgess astutely observes, municipal reformers attributed much of the urban malaise to inner city congestion, exacerbated by the indiscriminate mixing of residential, commercial, and industrial land uses, both of which flowed, inevitably and inexorably, from the unfettered operation of private market forces. Their solution lay, at least partly, in an unprecedented application of governmental authority, in the guise of comprehensive planning and zoning ordinances. Such urban planning would lessen population density through limitations on building heights and the amount of "set back" from streets and adjacent lots and would separate incompatible land uses by mandating the size, shape, and function of structures. Unable to prevent planning and zoning, land developers, real estate promoters, and other self-interested parties responded in typical American fashion by undermining or "capturing" the very devices intended to regulate their machinations in the public interest. Their chief weapon was the restrictive deed or covenant, which facilitated the segregation of metropolitan areas by socioeconomic class, race, ethnicity, and other divisive criteria. The author painstakingly analyzes the dynamic interaction between commonweal and privatism through extensive and intensive research in recorded land plats, deeds, planning reports, and minutes and records of city and suburban planning commissions and zoning boards. She traces the development of metropolitan Columbus sub-

division by subdivision, block by block, and lot by lot. Hardly as romantic or exciting as studying reformist rhetoric, campaign debates, or legislative combat, her approach reveals a great deal more about how the world really works.

Relentlessly, Burgess asks four crucial questions of her often deliberately obscurantist sources. Did zoning ordinances conform to Columbus's comprehensive plan? Did their implementation produce a balance of land uses, allowing sufficient housing for various income levels and providing for commercial and industrial sites in proportion to employment and consumer needs? Did zoning prevent the intrusion of incongruous or potentially harmful uses? Did zoning actions serve all income groups equally well, lessening inner city congestion and protecting the residential environment for those lacking adequate financial resources? Her judicious and carefully nuanced answers are all the more persuasive and damning precisely because of their dispassionately professional tone. While zoning boards and developers did not necessarily collude, she explains, their actions were frequently "almost reciprocal in nature." Although zoning "was not directly the cause of social stratification or racial segregation," she asserts that it "formalized and perpetuated existing development trends." Nor did zoning effectively serve the public interest in metropolitan Columbus. When "all was said and done," Burgess concludes, "planning served the private interest."

If anything, Burgess is too modest in her interpretive claims, both for the Columbus case study and for the possibilities of its wider application. Those who would challenge her book on either score had better be prepared to buttress their arguments with research that is equally detailed and time-consuming.

Public Values, Private Lands: Farmland Preservation Policy, 1933-1985, by Tim Lehman. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995. xii, 239 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY PHILIP J. NELSON, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

In his compact book, *Public Values, Private Lands*, Tim Lehman gives us an intriguing look at the historical processes at work in farmland preservation. The author deftly blends four areas of history—land use, the environment, agriculture, and public policy—into a cohesive analysis and explanation of why the United States, with much of the best land in the world and some of the strongest traditions of localism and individualism, would even be interested in the amount of farmland as a national issue. Both the tight focus of the book and the

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